Transcript Getting a Bill Through Congress Pt. 1

Announcer: Welcome to Civil Discourse. This podcast will use government documents to illuminate the workings of the American government and offer context around the effects of government agencies in your everyday life. And now your hosts, Nia Rodgers, public affairs librarian, and Dr. John Aughenbaugh, political science professor.

N. Rodgers: Good morning, Augie.

J. Aughenbaugh: Good morning, Nia. How are you?

N. Rodgers: I'm good, how are you?

J. Aughenbaugh: Fine.

N. Rodgers: Yay.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: Okay, well you're not going to be fine after I ask you this question, I don't think. Because this week's episode, I'd like you to explain to me why my childhood dream of Schoolhouse Rock, I'm Just a Bill, is completely wrong.

J. Aughenbaugh: It's not completely wrong.

N. Rodgers: Oh good. So there is salvage for my childhood.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes, there are just some flaws.

N. Rodgers: Okay, so you know how what we've figured out is that I want to be all things in the federal government? I've decided-

J. Aughenbaugh: Secretary of Defense, president, Supreme Court justice ...

N. Rodgers: Yeah, I want to be a Supreme Court justice at some point. I'm going to scale back a little bit, I'm going to be the junior senator from Virginia.

J. Aughenbaugh: Okay, that would be Tim Kaine.

N. Rodgers: Oh, I like Tim Kaine, I can't do the father thing, for obvious reasons.
J. Aughenbaugh: Okay, but that's all right. It's just the position.

N. Rodgers: Okay, good. So I'm going to be the junior senator and I'm going to propose a thing. The thing I want, we found a bill that I'd like to use as our jumping point, which is the ... And I'm going to read it because there's no way I can remember it. Its short title is the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, and it's, "To further the goals of the Paperwork Reduction Act to have federal agencies become more responsible and publicly accountable for reducing the burden of federal paperwork on the public and for other purposes." I like how they put, "... and for other purposes". It's like in your job where it says, "... and other duties as assigned," so we can make you do anything. So, one, that's a run on sentence. Are all the titles of acts run on sentences?

J. Aughenbaugh: Not all the time. Usually they try to word them so that when they do the acronym you get catchy stuff like the PATRIOT Act-

N. Rodgers: Which is a whole bunch of ...

J. Aughenbaugh: Oh yeah. But the letters in PATRIOT actually stand for other words. But, nevertheless, we all remember the PATRIOT Act.

N. Rodgers: And I don't think that this is called the PRA of 1995, but it probably is by some people.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes. Yeah, particularly staffers who have to-

N. Rodgers: Who have to write it down 400 times-

J. Aughenbaugh: Times, and then they try to provide oversight of the bureaucracy who's supposed to implement that law.

N. Rodgers: Which we're going to talk about later, we're going to talk about the fed register in an episode to be titled, the Federal Register. Unlike this episode which is going to be titled, How to Get an Act Through Congress.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: So, I come up with this brilliant idea. I want to reduce paperwork, I want to stop the killing of trees, I want to stop annoying people by making them fill out 474 forms to get a fishing license, whatever it is that I'm trying to reduce. I think it's both internal and external, this act, intended to reduce all of the paperwork of the government. Because one of the things that
people don't like about the government is what they call red tape, right? The sort of bureaucratic, you have to fill out a thousand forms and come back next week and, you know ... It's never that simple.

N. Rodgers: So I decide I want to do this. Do I just write it by myself and then say, "Look how wonderful I am. Here's a thing ..." I mean, how does the process work? So I'm laying in bed, I have this idea. I get up, I go to my office and I start writing.

J. Aughenbaugh: No.

N. Rodgers: Okay. Immediately I am wrong. Okay.

J. Aughenbaugh: So yes, we elect members to Congress, whether it be the House of Representatives or the United States Senate, and they have policy positions that they want to see made into law, but many of the ideas for laws don't necessarily come from US senators or representatives in the House. They might come from interest groups, important stakeholder groups. In the case of this particular law, it's actually been pretty well studied and there's even a West Wing episode about it, the impetus behind it was basically twofold. One was environmental, as you pointed out just a few moments ago, Nia, and that is to try to get the federal government to stop printing so much stuff. In particular, it's the requirement that federal agencies that do studies are supposed to, they used to be required by the United States Congress to print reports. So if they studied an endangered species-

N. Rodgers: The infamous spotted owl.

J. Aughenbaugh: The infamous spotted owl, right? They would have to print up a report. The report would get disseminated to the United States Congress, it would have to be available upon request if somebody wanted this report about the spotted owl.

N. Rodgers: As a side note, that was the Government Publishing Office, that does that, disseminates that both to Congress and to individuals and to libraries that request a copy of it for their records or for people to see.

J. Aughenbaugh: But the other part of this was the fact ... And again, this was a law that was passed, signed in 1995 during the Clinton administration. This was before the internet really exploded. And I know, many of you all are listening and are like-
N. Rodgers: No, there was no time before the internet, nothing happened. There were barely even people before the internet.

J. Aughenbaugh: So the capacity of the internet to encourage people to go ahead and look up stuff online, and not have to have all hardcopy, that was just a projection in 1995. So the other impetus behind this was, as you also correctly pointed out, all the bureaucratic red tape. Why do we have to fill out form after form after form after form? Well, as we will discuss, when we look at the federal register, in part it's an accountability check on the bureaucracy. Because by having forms filled out, we actually know what a bureaucracy did or did not do. The example I always like to use with my students here at VCU is, when you sign up to graduate, you fill out the graduation form. It actually gets reviewed by two or three different departments, your academic department, your college, and, oh yeah by the way, the graduation office. It's designed to go ahead and make sure only those who are eligible to graduate actually do.

N. Rodgers: And as a side note for people who haven't done this, if you don't do it you have to wait until the next semester. I know, because I didn't do it, and I had to wait until the next semester. Please learn from my mistake. I got my Master's degree one semester late, not because I hadn't already earned it, I in fact had earned it, but because I didn't fill out the paperwork. I didn't occur to me that anybody would question that I had done the Master's program. Turns out with 32,000 students you'd probably have to have a check on that, just saying.

J. Aughenbaugh: So let's just say-

N. Rodgers: So, learn from my mistakes.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes. If you listen to us enough we'll go ahead and give you all these important life lessons for free. So in your hypothetical, you're the junior senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

N. Rodgers: Which, by the way as a side note, junior and senior just means length of service, right? That's not like ... It's not age and it's not a position in the sense of, "I work for the other senator," like there's nothing like that. It's just, "I've been elected less length of time than the senior senator."

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, so Mark Warner is the senior senator simply because he's been ion the US Senate representing the Commonwealth of Virginia longer than Tim Kaine.
N. Rodgers: So, sorry, a little tangent side note there. Coming back to my brilliant idea...

J. Aughenbaugh: So you have this idea, and you probably won't go to the office after you wake up and write it up. You'll probably go ahead and have a staffer do it, or you'll have a staffer work with an interest group, that will come up with the draft. Once you have a draft that is ready, then you submit the proposed bill to the clerk of either house of the United States Congress.

N. Rodgers: And in my case the Senate. So there's a clerk of each, there's not one clerk for both, there's a clerk of the House and a clerk of the Senate.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, and actually it's a clerk's office, because a whole bunch of bills get proposed every year in both houses of Congress.

N. Rodgers: So it's multiple people.

J. Aughenbaugh: But your proposed bill then gets a number. You're looking at the-

N. Rodgers: I'm sorry, I'm looking at the piece where I was ... That's what dead air sounds like. S244, is that the number that you're talking about?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yup, Senate Bill 244, yup.

N. Rodgers: Okay, and House bills have HB mumbly mumbly number.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: Okay and Senate has Senate, S period mumbly mumbly number.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: Okay.

J. Aughenbaugh: And then at that point, a determination is made in the House, it's the House Rules Committee, in the Senate typically it's the clerk's office will go ahead and assign your bill to a committee...

N. Rodgers: That likely has some interest in the topic. They don't just ... They wouldn't give this to Agriculture necessarily, unless they thought Agriculture was creating a lot of extra paperwork or whatever.

J. Aughenbaugh: Chances are it's government operations, okay.
N. Rodgers: Which makes sense.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, and at that point, then the committee chair will determine when the committee will actually review it, hold hearings on it, et cetera.

N. Rodgers: And we've previously discussed that the committee chairs are from the party, the party that's in the majority in that particular body.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: Which is not necessarily the same office as the president.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's correct.

N. Rodgers: So for now, it's the Democrats in the House and it's the Republicans in the Senate. So the people who are the chairs on the committees in the Senate would be Republican.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's correct, okay?

N. Rodgers: Okay, but they have a co-chair that is-

J. Aughenbaugh: Not a co-chair, a ranking minority member.

N. Rodgers: Thank you, a ranking minority member from the other committee, from the other party that can be publicly powerless, or ... I'm sure that in some cases they build strong relationships and work together across the aisle-

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, particularly if they both have both served in the Senate for an extended period of time. But the ranking minority member represents the minority party on that committee, to make sure that bills that are proposed from the minority party actually get due consideration. Again, in this hypothetical, since Nia is the junior senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, assuming that she's of the same political party as the current occupant, Tim Kaine, a Democrat, the ranking minority member would be representing that bill, if you will, on the committee to make sure that it gets proper consideration. If it's bill that needs to have a hearing, do people want to weigh in on this? Does it need further study?

N. Rodgers: Oh wait, so some bills don't have hearings?

J. Aughenbaugh: That is correct, because the committee chair might go ahead and determine that it's a bill that needs further study. Now, what could happen with
further study? Well, the United States Congress has a number of administrative agencies that work for the Congress. So one of the first things that will happen to any proposed bill is that it will get a score sheet, a scoring from the Congressional Budget Office. How much will this cost if we pass the bill? Okay?

N. Rodgers: Okay, which is different that the Office of Budget and Management-

J. Aughenbaugh: Management and Budget, which is in the executive branch.

N. Rodgers: And we're going to talk about budgets in a different episode. [crosstalk 00:14:02].

J. Aughenbaugh: Our episode about the federal register, about a proposed regulation from an executive branch agency, one of the requirements is that they get a scoring from OMB.

N. Rodgers: Okay, so someone somewhere has to figure out how much money this is going to cost.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: You can't just willy nilly pass things and then it turns out they cost trillions of dollars and we can't afford it. Because then we've made a law we can't ... We have made and unfunded mandate.

J. Aughenbaugh: It could be an unfunded mandate or ... I mean think about the debate that went into the Affordable Care Act before it got passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama. One of the first things the Affordable Care Act, that happened to it, was the Congressional Budget Office evaluated it and gave, if you will, a scoring. This is how much money it will cost to implement the law, this is how much money we are projecting will be saved in the healthcare industry if we pass the bill. All right?

N. Rodgers: Okay, os things may cost but they also may benefit and ... So they do the whole cost benefit analysis to figure out what the end result will be.

J. Aughenbaugh: So you're going to get a scoring from the Congressional Budget Office. If it's a bill that has been proposed, discussed previously, then the Congressional Research Service, CRS, will actually be asked to do an analysis. To give you an example, when looking at judicial nominations, nominations to the federal courts, the Senate Judiciary Committee has requested and the Congressional Research Service has produced multiple
reports about the nomination process for federal judges historically. The Congressional Research Service has a really good reputation by members of both political parties in the Congress, because of the quality, the kind of sort of nonpartisan research that they do.

N. Rodgers: And you're speaking of my people because those people are librarians and they work for the Library of Congress and those reports are generally deemed to be pretty darn neutral. They come back with just fact, they're not trying to affect policy, they're just trying to present what is known.

J. Aughenbaugh: The Congressional Research Service is staffed with PhDs, experts, these are prestigious positions, whether you're talking about political science, agriculture, whatever the case may be. These are highly desired positions, they're very competitive. These people are known experts in the field.

N. Rodgers: Don't tell anybody but that's one of my dream jobs.

J. Aughenbaugh: I wouldn't mind working for the Congressional Research Service.

N. Rodgers: I think that it's an incredible service and it's incredibly busy. They produce a large number of reports because they have to respond to every congressional request. They can't just say, "I don't want to study that." That's not how it works. Just like in the library, I don't get to say to a student who asks for help, "Yeah, I'm not feeling you today." That's not how that works.

J. Aughenbaugh: It's like a student that comes by before an exam and says, "Hey, I want to go ahead and ask you questions about the upcoming exam." "I'm sorry, I haven't had my coffee yet. Come back later." I don't have that choice. [crosstalk 00:17:55]

N. Rodgers: The whole point of this is to give you as much access as possible.

J. Aughenbaugh: Okay, so once you get to-

N. Rodgers: And, as a side note, GPO, sorry, the Government Publishing Office has just agreed to make certain that every congressional report back to all of them, the beginning, will eventually be available on their website. They're working on that now. They've got a bunch of the current ones up, well, they've got all of the current ones up and they're working backwards. So eventually those will all be gathered in one spot, which they have not been. They have, in previous iterations of the internet, the FAS has had some and Google has had some and the Library of Congress has had some,
but nobody has had a centralized location, and the Government Publishing Office has realized that that's something that researchers would really like to have access to in a centralized-

J. Aughenbaugh: That would be a huge resource, and I tell my students all the time, if-

N. Rodgers: There's probably a CRS report on this.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, right.

N. Rodgers: Now, some of those are classified, just as a note for our listeners. Some of those are classified, or rather some of the work they're asked to do they can't release because of the nature of the work or the nature of the subject, too sensitive or whatever.

J. Aughenbaugh: And in that case, you're talking about a different law passed by Congress, the Freedom of Information Act, which actually has exceptions for certain types of documents produced by either the legislative or the executive branch.

N. Rodgers: And that has to do with security and loss of life and that sort of thing. You can't just go around asking, "Could you give me the names of all the spies that we have in whatever country?" Because that would mean that the next day they're all dead and, you know ... So that sort of thing, anything ... Or, "Can you tell me how many, exactly how many tanks we have in a certain area of Afghanistan?" No, the answer to that is no, because that's a security question.

J. Aughenbaugh: A member of Congress who doesn't have that kind of background may have asked for a report from the Congressional Research Service, and in producing that report it will be reviewed to make sure it can be made public per the Freedom of Information Act.

N. Rodgers: And redacted if not so. So, anyway, so now we're at the point where it may have gotten sent to, I need more research. Is that a way of tabling it and hoping that it goes away forever? In some instances?

J. Aughenbaugh: In some instances, yes, because in part ... Committee chairs have quite a bit of authority and discretion. If they don't like a particular bill, or if they think a particular bill is going to take away from the agenda they want to achieve as the committee chair, they can go ahead and table it for further research, which is the diplomatic way to get rid of bill. Or they can just go ahead and table it for no reason whatsoever, or-
N. Rodgers: Which is a message, that's a message to me, "Don't bring this up again."

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, don't bring this up or, you know ...

N. Rodgers: Well, maybe. Maybe later when I'm feeling it, but I'm not feeling it now.

J. Aughenbaugh: But if the committee chair has no choice, either members of his own party on the committee or all of the minority party members want a up or down vote, then they can take a vote. They can go ahead and either reject the bill or they can approve the bill.

N. Rodgers: So, rejected bills just die.

J. Aughenbaugh: They just die.

N. Rodgers: That's it.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: So there are many numbers that never get used beyond the S244, poof, that's it. If ti doesn't go anywhere, it just ends. But you can reintroduce that in the next session, right? You can't reintroduce it in the current session, is that correct?

J. Aughenbaugh: That's typically the rule.

N. Rodgers: Okay, yeah, don't bug us with this again, we told you no. That's like when you ask your parents a second time just in case their hearts may have ... "Can I really not borrow the car on Saturday?" While they, "No, I said no."

J. Aughenbaugh: For those of us who have problems with authority, typically in the House and the Senate, you get one chance to go ahead and make the request, and then the second and third, no. Those just don't exist. Now, before they take a vote, they're going to hold hearings, particularly if a bill has not been tabled for any reason.

N. Rodgers: Oh really? For all bills?

J. Aughenbaugh: Typically, yeah. To understand the lawmaking process, and this is where, I think, Schoolhouse Rock probably does us a disservice, is this. The origin of the bills hardly come from constituents. So if you think about Schoolhouse Rock, a bunch of people want a stop sign. First of all,
Congress isn't going to go and pass a bill about a stop sign, but nevertheless ...

**N. Rodgers:** But, they are working with six to 10 year olds, so ...

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Okay, fine, fair enough. Chances are it's not going to be Joe or Jane constituent. It's going to be an interest group, it's going to be important stakeholders, maybe somebody who contributed to their campaign ...

**N. Rodgers:** This is where lobbyists come in?

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Sure, lobbyists, all the time.

**N. Rodgers:** So lobbyists write legislation?

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Sure, yep, lobbyists do. They write draft legislation.

**N. Rodgers:** "Here, we think you ought to pass this."

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Yes-

**N. Rodgers:** And that's legal?

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Sure it's legal. Now some people go ahead and complain that lobbyists have outsized influence in our, if you will, governmental process. But at the same time, as I remind my students, we can't expect members of Congress to be experts on every single policy, so ... I'm talking to a person, you Nia, who follows politics, who, because of your job, you deal with government documents all the time. I don't think that you know every single thing about every single policy. Likewise-

**N. Rodgers:** I wish.

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Yeah, but we can't.

**N. Rodgers:** We can't. That's why we go look things up. That's the purpose of research, is, "Oh, what is that? Let's go ask."

**J. Aughenbaugh:** Or we consult with people who are noted experts, right?

**N. Rodgers:** Hence this podcast.
J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, so if I don't know, for instance, about nuclear policy or agreements that we've had, I'll go ahead and talk to my colleague Bill Newman, because he knows this stuff. He knows US foreign policy, I don't. On the other hand, Bill might be thinking, "Well, what do presidents do in regards to nominating people to be cabinet secretaries?" He kind of sort of knows I'm a little bit of a geek about that stuff. So he says, "Hey Augie, what's the process like? What goes into this?"

J. Aughenbaugh: Likewise, committees and members of Congress will sometimes say ... They'll go to an interest group, they'll go to a lobbyist and they'll say ... And I'll give you an example, just this past week the House of Representatives passed a gun control law, or excuse me, it's not a law, it's a bill because it hasn't been yet approved by the Senate. And even if it got approved by the Senate it would have to go to the president, president signs it, then it becomes a law.

N. Rodgers: Or vetoes it.

J. Aughenbaugh: Or vetoes it.

N. Rodgers: Which, I believe, this ... I believe in this question there's already been suggestion that it would be vetoed.

J. Aughenbaugh: It would be vetoed.

N. Rodgers: So presidents sometimes warn you ahead of time.

J. Aughenbaugh: Oh sure.

N. Rodgers: They'll say to the House, "Slow your roll there, buddy. I'm going to veto that if you pass it."

J. Aughenbaugh: And it's the threat of the veto that is oftentimes part of the lawmaking process, because-

N. Rodgers: We'll go back and we'll work on it and try to figure a way to make it palatable to the other side, or palatable to the president, or whatever.

J. Aughenbaugh: So, with the Paperwork Reduction Act, if you think about who would object-

N. Rodgers: People who love paper and hate trees.
J. Aughenbaugh: Not necessarily.

N. Rodgers: Well, or people who like trails, people who think that the internet isn't as stable as we think it is and that maybe it's good to have a-

J. Aughenbaugh: Well, the point I was going to make was, let's go back to 1995, pre-internet explosion, et cetera. So one of the groups that would be against it would be the paper industry, the lumber industry, et cetera.

N. Rodgers: Didn't even think about them, but yeah, I see that.

J. Aughenbaugh: Because the government requiring reports to be produced is a huge demand in their market. So you have those folks.

N. Rodgers: The government is the largest buyer of everything, isn't it? Except iPhones.

J. Aughenbaugh: From paper to paperclips to staples to-

N. Rodgers: Coffee [crosstalk 00:27:27] mac and cheese. If you have to feed an army, you're the biggest buyer of mac and cheese, no matter what. Or whatever.

J. Aughenbaugh: The US government's expenditures as a percentage of the nation's gross domestic product is usually around 20 to 30%, and that's even when we're not in a war.

N. Rodgers: So when we're on a war footing it just jacks up to significantly higher. So I see, so you're talking about an enormous reduction in their ability to do business in their industry.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, because all of a sudden, the demand from the government, potentially, could be reduced significantly, and how are you going to replace that as a private sector industry or company? That would be opposition. Now, let's think about those who would be in favor of it. Well, environmental groups, as you mentioned, would be like, "Hey, we don't need to be killing all these trees to produce all this paper for reports that don't get read in the first place."

N. Rodgers: "And look we have this cool thing that's coming out called the internet, and eventually it's going to be ... " Some of the more forward thinking people might be saying, "Eventually that's going to be a way that we can disseminate information without having to do all these environmentally destructive things." But also, just the sheer aggravation. There's probably
constituents just were for it in the sense of, "Is this going to be less annoying? Awesome. Let's do that, whatever that thing is."

J. Aughenbaugh: That is true, but then also think about this. We now know, because of the development of the internet, that there are certain pockets of the American population that don't have access to the internet, what is known as the digital divide.

N. Rodgers: Right, a lot of rural areas don't have, or if they do have internet it's incredibly slow, it's on their telephone lines kind of thing, it's not even-

J. Aughenbaugh: Or they have access at public libraries, but in many small communities, when there are budget cuts, one of the first targeted areas, and we know this because of research, are libraries. It's considered a nicety not a necessity. That is an anathema to both of us in this podcast-

N. Rodgers: Right, it makes us both angry just so you know.

J. Aughenbaugh: But nevertheless, we also are aware that some people, if they wanted access to government reports, would only have access to it if was being produced in hardcopy. So these are all the kinds of things that go into consideration of a proposed bill, and if the bill gets a hearing, you're going to have various groups who are going to be asked to go ahead and speak about their perceptions of the bill, from environmental groups to paper industry to good citizens groups-

N. Rodgers: Rural development groups to, who are thinking, "Okay, but we won't have access." And there's also the conspiracy theorists, who I love, who say, "If it's only electronic you can alter it and I won't know that it's been altered." Which, I have to say in fairness to the conspiracy theorists, is actually a fear. That is a legitimate fear that if there is only one copy, and somebody monkeys with that copy, then ... Whereas if it's in print, it is much harder to do that. That's a legitimate argument for ...

N. Rodgers: It's at the extreme. I'm not going to say that that's the common thing, because really the government produces so much material that sneaking around, changing things would be pretty difficult. What actually happens, I think, is more accidental. Things get updated without anybody realizing that they need to keep the old copy so that people can compare those things. Researchers will say, "Okay, but this is the 2018 edition, where's the 2016 edition so that we can see what's been updated?" I think it's more a case of ignorance rather than malevolence, although conspiracy theorists
would say that I'm crazy to think that. They would think I'm crazy to think a lot of things.

J. Aughenbaugh: So we're talking about a bill that became a law in the mid-90s, and chances are, since that point in time, it's not chances are, I'm actually aware that it has happened, there have been other proposed bills to amend the Paperwork Reduction Act. The other groups who might be asked to testify at a hearing will be executive branch bureaucracies. So for instance, the Government Printing Office that you mentioned earlier. Their sole responsibility is to go ahead and print government documents. They're going to be asked, what will be the impact on your work? Do you think that this is a good thing or a bad thing? Because they are, as they were created, to be the experts on government documents.

N. Rodgers: Do I get to correct you slightly?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, go ahead.

N. Rodgers: Yay. I never get to do that, because you know so much more than I do.

J. Aughenbaugh: I seriously doubt that.

N. Rodgers: But they are also tasked with preserving government documents, so not just printing them but also preserving them, and I would imagine that they basically had a tiny little cow trying to think of how they were going to preserve things that were no longer in print. It is easier to preserve things in print. We have techniques where we know how to do that-

J. Aughenbaugh: And again, this is before stuff like the cloud, et cetera, where-

N. Rodgers: But even that's hard to maintain. I don't think people realize electronic documents deteriorate, files deteriorate, so you have to maintain them. It's slightly more complicated than maintaining paper. We have papyrus from ancient Egypt. There are ways to preserve that kind of material. It's a little bit harder to do that electronically. So I feel certain that the Superintendent of Documents at the time probably had mixed feelings. Like, "Awesome, this is less stuff that we actually have to physically store, but holy cow, how are we now going to preserve this electronically?"

J. Aughenbaugh: So let's say you hold the hearings, then you take a vote. Let's say the vote's positive.

N. Rodgers: In the committee.
J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, you take a vote in the committee-

N. Rodgers: Okay, so you're not, this is not to the whole floor, we're not even to the whole floor yet.

J. Aughenbaugh: No.

N. Rodgers: We're going to get there in a minute.

J. Aughenbaugh: So the committee takes a vote, say the vote is positive. Your bill to reduce government paperwork is approved by the committee.

N. Rodgers: And then published, probably in print.

J. Aughenbaugh: Exactly.

N. Rodgers: Sorry, that's just funny. Anyway ...

J. Aughenbaugh: At that point, in the Senate, the Senate majority leader decides, when bills that have been reported out ... That's what it's called, a positive vote committee reports out a positive vote on a bill.

N. Rodgers: Do they also report out a negative vote?

J. Aughenbaugh: Sure they do.

N. Rodgers: Okay, so they report one way or another what they decided to do. So they have to tell the other ninety people who are not in this committee, or 88 or whatever, I don't know how many people are in committees, but-

J. Aughenbaugh: It depends. Some committees have as many as 45 or 50-

N. Rodgers: Oh really? So they just report to the lesser half?

J. Aughenbaugh: It's just bizarre, right? By the way, the committees are larger in the House because there's 435 members in the House, right? Most Senate committees are somewhere around 20 to 24, 23, okay. So it reports out. Say it's positive, the Senate majority leader has almost blanket authority, discretion to decide when a vote's going to occur.

N. Rodgers: And on that note, we're going to pause, and we're going to catch this up in part two, because I feel certain that there's more stuff that we need to talk about.
J. Aughenbaugh: Sure, sure.

N. Rodgers: Thank you.

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